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ENGLISH READING LITERACY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WEST JAVA ACCORDING TO PISA AND PIRLS MODEL

Suhendra Yusuf[1)] & Zubaedah Wiji Lestari[2)]
Nusantara Islamic University

Abstract

This research aims at examining and describing the student's reading literacy test results following the principles of two international studies of PISA and PIRLS. The sample of this study involves 15 schools at Sumedang Regency and 518 students consisted of 256 males and 262 females, coming from both accredited public and private schools. The results show that the students are able to do this international model of test quite well with the average score of 62.065. The students from public schools obviously get better achievement (64.95) than those from private ones (59.18). This is due to the fact that there are some influencing factors from the students themselves, the teachers, and school quality as well as their school environments examined in this research. The research is expected to provide alternative test model based on international standards to improve the quality of English education in secondary schools in Indonesia.

Keywords*: reading literacy, PISA, PIRLS, test Model*

1. INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on reading literacy model to English Subject in Secondary School according to study of PISA and PIRLS. Those studies are selected due to several considerations. First, the implementation of PISA and PIRLS during 2000 and 2009 in Indonesia showed that Indonesian students have not been familiar well with an international standard of reading skill. Second, the implementation of PISA and PIRLS studies is regarded as a waste of both time and money.Third, reading based literacy applies integrated approach in substance. Fourth, the objectives and its curriculum or syllabus are directed to achieve a high level of thinking. Fifth, learning model gives a kind of learning experience to students in achieving their skills, such as thinking critically and creatively, as distinctively mentioned in its standard process. The last, that model is related to life skills as a preparation to live the nowadays life.

The main problems to study and to develop can be formulated into four questions as follow, (a) What is the international benchmark in reading literacy that refers to PISA international study? (b) What is the result of the implementation of reading literacy model test at the sampled school in Sumedang, West Java? (d) How is the students' literacy environment at the sampled school in Sumedang, West Java?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In international standard context applied in PIRLS and PISA, reading literacy is defined as a students' skill in applying written information into their daily life. The skill is how to read, to understand, to apply, and to do a reflection to a text according to the purpose of reading it; that is to increase and to improve knowledge and self potency to take a role actively in society (Yusuf, 2006). Reading literacy concept applied in PISA is set into three dimensions, namely format of reading material, kind of reading assignment or aspect, and circumstance in which the text is applied.

In study of PISA, the first aspect is text format which is divided into continuous text and non-continuous text. The second aspect is a skill or competence related to cognitive process that is attached to reading task. The third aspect is situation or context that is a categorized text based on the purpose of which a text is composed, on its relationship with other people, and on the general context.

It is mentioned in the study of PIRLS that there are three aspects in reading; comprehending process, reading process, and reading habit and attitude. Reading literacy is related not only to skill of constructing

meaning of various text but also to habit and attitude supporting reading in order to make it as a whole life activity. This habit and attitude plays an important role in creating individuals who are able to improve their potency in a literate and well-educated society.

PIRLS (2009), moreover, stated that factors such as neighborhood, school environment, and especially national policy in education influence reading skill.

From the design point of view, reading-based literacy mentioned above will definitely need and integrated approach from the contents perspective. Contents included in text should be selected from natural science, math, and other subjects in which RSBI focused on. The kinds of text included in learning design should, therefore, consist of a text either rich in words or not. Reading skill plotted in learning design should also be formulated in line with levels of thinking that is initiated from low to high. The reading skill should be developed from an integrated skill in content standard (SKKD) and from a developed and assessed skill in a study of reading literacy skill as it was included in the study of PISA. From the aspect of evaluation, on the other hand, learning design should be directed to assessing basic reading skill, to finding out information from text, to acquiring intermediate skill, and to appraising or to criticizing message or idea comprised in text.

Various researches related to reading literacy skill of Indonesian students in both national and international scope still confirm that the majority of Indonesian students have low reading literacy skill. In the study of PISA in 2001, for example, from 42 surveyed countries, Indonesian students were at the 39th place a bit higher from Albania and Peru (Yusuf, 2006). Research results about grasping UAN 2004 test materials of SMP/MTs and SMA/MA students in districts or municipalities in West Java shows that SMP/MTs students' ability in grasping content competency problems is lower than process and contextual competency.

A research about comprehending narrative and expository text summarized by Goldman and Rekastraw, Jr. (ibid) mentions the importance of structural text aspects in comprehending it. Conclusion to be taken from the research is that ability to use structural aspects attached to a text can improve reading skill in term of identifying main idea and memorizing as well as comprehending the text.

From the preceding research, there is no single research and development approach taken to improve learning materials based on international standard in schools meant to be internationally standardized. The research and development toward international standard-based learning materials referred to the study of PIRLS and PISA are, therefore, an initial effort in improving quality of the top grade schools.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Subject of this research is the 7th grade of secondary school in Sumedang, West Java. Purposive random sampling was used to determine the sample. 15 secondary schools were selected randomly and gradually by the categories of need improvement, moderate, and good.

Developed research instruments include (1) questionnaire to identify students literacy background, the attitude of both teacher and students in class learning interaction, (2) international based test using the model of PISA developed by researcher.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, some activities have been carried out according to the research purpose and urgency. This research report is, therefore, divided into four parts that intended to answer the research questions.

(a) The international benchmark in reading literacy that refers to PISA international study

Skill measured in PISA is skill of knowledge and of three cognitive domains, namely reading, math, and science. In PIRLS, on the other hand, the measured skill relates only to students reading skill. In PISA and PIRLS, there are two categories of problem; multiple

choices in which students choose the correct answer from several alternatives and constructed response in which students are expected to answer a question in form of writing or essay.

The measured skill is arranged gradually from the lowest level of difficulty to a higher one. Problems to solve in multiple choices can be varied from the simplest one as choosing one alternative answer as yes/no to a more complex one as responding to several choices. Problems in form of essay are also varied in the way of answering the question by writing from words or phrases briefly to longer answer with suggested numbers of sentence and then to open essay.

Reading skill in the study of PISA and PIRLS has wider definition in which students are intended not only to be familiar with letters in text, but also to comprehend and be thoughtful of various texts with different situation. Text structure in PISA and PIRLS is divided into two, continuous text and non-continuous text. Continuous text is a text which consists of sentence series arranged in a paragraph in form of description, narration, exposition, argumentation, or injunction; non-continuous text, on the other hand, is a text which is designed in form of matrix.

The two kinds of text are divided into the following texts which are the first five of them are continuous text and the rest of them are non-continuous text . Regarding to this reading skill, PISA considers it from how students process text in three major skills; skill of looking for and finding out information; skill of developing meaning gained from the found out information then making inference using one information or more; and skill of doing reflection and evaluation to content of text related to daily experience, background knowledge, and idea developed from the obtained information.

(2) The result of students reading literacy's test from sampled schools at the sampled school

The next activity in this research is developing reading literacy test model by using text which is appropriate with students' background knowledge and able to elevate local wisdom. Text used in this research is about Sumedang.

The result of the test are as follows:
Total students involved in this research are 518, consisted of 256 males and 262 females coming from both public and private schools. From 15 sampled schools, five of them are private schools. All of the schools have been accredited, two of them by A+, ten by A, and three by B. The result of reading literacy test indicates that in average, students from public school get higher score (64.95) than those of private school (59.18). However, when all of the 15 schools are compared one another, it shows that there is distribution of achievement to those schools. Three public schools surpass the others, but there is one private school (school-1) surpasses seven public schools and the four other private schools. The comparison as seen on the figure below has shown that there is a quite great difference in students achievement, both in public schools (the highest score is 79 and the lowest is 52) and in private schools (the highest score is 69 and the lowest is 50) then if the average score is taken, public schools get higher score than private schools.

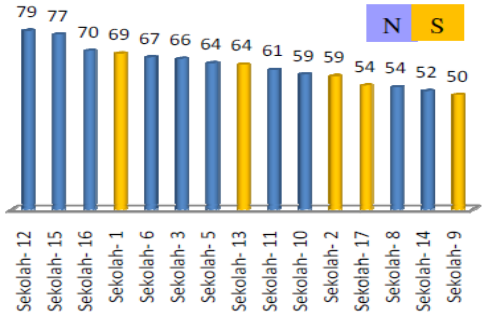

Figure-1: Achievement comparison between public and private school

Moreover, when this test result is seen from its school quality, as informed in its accreditation, students from the A+ accredited schools generally get higher score than those from the lower accreditation. It shows that in general, school accreditation can be used to identify students reading literacy in Sumedang.

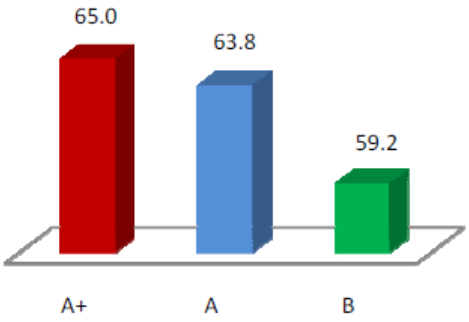

Figure-2: Students achievement average based on their school accreditation

When the achievement average of each school is taken, there will be variability of each school achievement to identify. As seen on the figure, the four schools with accreditation of A (school 12, 15, and 16) and the one with accreditation of B (school-1) have surpassed the two with accreditation of A+ (school 13 and 3). It shows that institutionally, good schools do not totally depend on their accreditation. The figure also shows that there is a quite great difference in achievement of one group with accreditation of A and one of B, but the gap does not happen in schools with accreditation of A+. This achievement shows that the difference of school quality of each school with accreditation of A and B is so great that their average score is still below the school with accreditation of A+. The figure below shows the difference in achievement of schools based on their accreditation.

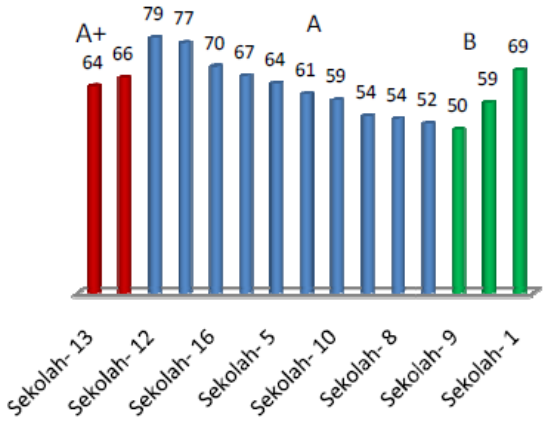

Figure-3: Comparison of achievement for each school (based on the accreditation status)

It can be concluded that this student's achievement in reading literacy test in school in Sumedang is varied in general. By and large, public schools are more superior to private schools. From the accreditation, schools with accreditation of A+ surpasses those with accreditation of A and B. However, when it comes to each school, not all of schools with higher accreditation get higher score as well.

(3) Factors influenced students' achievement in reading literacy, such as family factor, teacher, school, and headmaster.

Based on the questionnaires distributed to students that became the sample of this research, it is found out that there are factors predicted to influence students' achievement. The factors have relationship with students' activity and condition in their home and school. Furthermore, factors as teacher and headmaster have influence also to their students' achievement.

This section will discuss some aspects that have significant role in students' literacy development.

The first aspect is about family members who are with them almost all the time in their home. Data shows that from several choices about family member spending the time with students, most of the students (32.29%) answer that they spend most of their time with their mother.

It is possible (related to other questions in the questionnaire) considering that most of students mother is a housewife. The answer to this question also emphasizes an opinion that mother is the one who has a very significant role in children development. Regarding to literacy surroundings, it can be concluded that mother is an agent who can improve children literacy ability. Education pattern, habit, activities in students surroundings, and family (especially mother) will shape children literacy pattern, which will in turn shape their (reading) habit.

a.	Mother (including step mother)	30.29
b.	Father (including step father)	10.50
c.	Brothers (or step brothers)	13.71
d.	Sisters (or step sisters)	15.23

e.	Grandfather and grandmother	15.94
f.	Others	14.35

Table 1
Family members spending most of their time with students

Allowing children to explore literacy artifacts (reading materials, pencil, chalk, and other writing instruments to scratch on wall) since early is an initial form of children experience in literacy which will be the foundation of their future literacy life. It is in line with Musthafa (2008), that in family life children, they regularly read and involve in interactive discussion and literacy practice supported by provided access in their surroundings to various reading materials and writing instruments. Musthafa (2008), stated that in this surrounding, children are supported to explore their world and express their feelings using any available ways. Parents' awareness of exposing their children to literacy media is the main aspect in supporting children literacy development.

The next aspect asked in the questionnaire is learning facilities by which students can have in their home. The table below shows percentage of learning facilities that the students have.

Facilities	%
Desk	67.67
Own bedroom	91.57
Comfortable place to study	76.84
Computer for school matter	27.24
Education software	20.43
Internet connection	46.83
Subject books	95.91
General knowledge books (encyclopedia)	61.90
Fiction books	48.23
Popular books (novel, comic, *manga*)	67.45
Magazines	50.15
Newspapers	78.55
Arts instruments (music, fine arts)	61.91
Dictionaries	81.51

Table 2
Students' facilities in their home

From the table, it can be described that facilities that almost all students have are subject books (95.91%), own bedroom (91.57%), dictionaries (81.51%), and newspaper (78.55%). On the other hand, facilities that a few students have are fiction books (48.23%), internet connection (46.83%), computer for school matter (27.24%), and education software (20.43%).

From the students answer, it is found that facilities that most of students have are those which are related to education in school. Whereas facilities which is related to recent technology and reading materials for reading for pleasure are only possessed by a few students. It is important to put additional understanding that the development of imagination, creativity, and logical capability need to be fully supported by pleasurable reading materials which in accordance with children interests. Those kinds of reading material are not always found in subject books, but in other materials, such as novel, comic, and encyclopedia.

The availability of reading materials (books) outside subject books, newspaper, and magazines in students home is also asked in the questionnaire. To make the students easy to predict number of books it is then suggested that for a meter of book shelf, it usually consists of 40 books.

	Number of books	%
a.	0 – 25 books	63.25
b.	26 – 50 books	13.39
c.	51 – 100 books	13.16
d.	101 – 250 books	4.15
e.	251 – 500 books	2.43
f.	Other numbers	3.63

Table 3
Number of books available in home

From the answers given by students, it is found out that most of the students (63.25%) have minimum numbers of availability of non-subject reading materials. This minimum number of book the students have results in less familiar with various kinds of reading materials, and this condition influences literacy development in an area. According to Musthafa (2008), way to socialize literacy world to children can be

done by making them familiar with and/or involved in (1) literacy artifacts and their functions, (2) literacy experience, (3) literacy event, and (4) literacy interaction.

5. CONCLUSION

From the results of the test, it can be concluded that in general it is not equitable with student achievement. It also depend on the status of the school. The research also reveals that students' achievement is strongly influenced by environmental literacy, the family environment, school, and condition of their teachers.

From these results, it was shown that to improve students' reading literacy, variety of activities that support both literacy activities at home, school, and in society are required. In the context of education in schools, it is suggested that there are some activities facilitated and supported by various parties to develop critical and responsible human resources. For the government, it is suggested readings material that should be provided are those which appropriate to students' socio-cultural context in which students can grow and develop into person who has good character and aware of their physical social, and cultural environment,.

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